

# CURSE OF STRAHD: RETURN TO DEATH HOUSE

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**SOLITARY CHARACTER  
MINI-ADVENTURE CS1R**

**EXCALIBUR PENN**

**A mini-adventure module designed for one player character  
initially of 4th level and a Dungeon Master.**



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## BOXED TEXT

At various places, the adventure presents narrative text that's meant to be read or paraphrased to the player by the Dungeon Master. This descriptive text is offset in boxes like this one. Boxed text is most commonly used to give a picture of rooms or present portions of scripted dialogue necessary for story-telling.

## SIDEBAR DISCUSSION

### DM'S OPTION: SOLITARY CHARACTER OR PARTY?

As a solitary adventure, the House can create the elements of horror in a single character far more effectively than within those that have the safety of a group. While the individual hauntings may not be enough to single-handedly cause a character to leave the House or to suffer death, combined they build an atmosphere of dread and have the potential for a character to flee or die from "a thousand cuts." Add in monsters and traps and this can especially be true.

While this adventure is designed for a solitary character of initially level 4, with some adjustments it can be made into an adventure for a lower/higher level character or a small party.

Here are a few ways that this can be done:

- Adjust the number of monsters for the size of the group.
- Adjust the hit points of the monsters to create an appropriate challenge for the character/group.
- Adjust the monsters by developing a lesser/greater version of the monster that will still challenge the character/group.
- Adjust the type of monsters by CR rating for the size and level of the character/group. Make sure that these monsters are appropriate for a horror situation.
- Increase or decrease damage from traps and hauntings depending on the level of the character/group.
- Develop less actual fighting and more of a Difficulty (Skill) Check or Role-playing Challenge to navigate the scenario.
- Increase or decrease the number required for a Difficulty Check (DC) to be successful.
- Keep in mind the idea of the progressive nature of horror in the module by floor level: from mild/tame to challenging to dangerous.
- There are natural breaks in the module, by floor, points of humor, holy areas, places for rest, etc. Don't make every room a deadly encounter.

## SIDEBAR DISCUSSION

### WHAT TYPE OF CHARACTER SHOULD I PLAY?

As a solitary character in a horror adventure, characters that typically have the most advantages are a paladin or lawful good cleric. However, other characters can certainly succeed without such divine advantages and can bring their own unique abilities to bear upon the mysteries of Death House. Don't be afraid to try out unusual characters, or characters that you have never played before. Remember, smart role-playing is just as important as character abilities. This is a good test adventure to see if your character will be further successful in the Demi-plane of Dread.

# INTRODUCTION

The following written subject matter is for the Dungeon Master (DM) only. It contains a complete 5th edition (5e) *Dungeons & Dragons* (D&D) *Curse of Strahd* solitary character adventure redesigned from the mini-adventure *Death House*, as well as links to descriptions for every creature and magic item that appears in the adventure. Elements of the content are revealed to the player character (PC) as they encounter it through the game story.

## RUNNING THE ADVENTURE

*Curse of Strahd: Return to Death House* is a *Dungeons & Dragons* (D&D) solitary mini-adventure module for a 4th-level character, designed to advance the character to 6th level. Only the *Curse of Strahd* Sourcebook, and Core Rulebooks (*Player's Handbook*, *Monster Manual*, and *Dungeon Master's Guide*) are required to run this adventure.

### Glossary

The adventure uses terms that might be unfamiliar to you. A few of these terms are described here.

**Character.** This term refers to the adventurer role-played by the player. Sometimes they are called a player character (PC). They are the protagonist in any D&D adventure.

**Nonplayer Characters (NPCs).** This term refers to characters and/or creatures run by the DM. How an NPC behaves is dictated by the adventure and by the DM.

### Magic Items and Monsters

Whenever the text refers to a magic item, its name is presented in *italic* type. For a description of the item and its magical properties, see the *Dungeon Master's Guide*. A magic item's properties may not be readily apparent to the untrained eye and may require identifying spells or lore skill to be revealed (although their benefits/penalties may be applied by the DM to PC rolls, etc.).

Similarly, whenever the adventure text presents a creature's name in **bold** type, that's a visual cue directing you to the creature's game statistics in the *Monster Manual*. There are some key creatures whose statistics will be listed and explained fully in the area they are most encountered.

### Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this adventure.

DC = Difficulty Class	XP = experience points
cp = copper piece(s)	sp = silver piece(s)
ep = electrum piece(s)	gp = gold piece(s)
pp = platinum piece(s)	hp = hit point(s)

## LEVEL ADVANCEMENT

In this solitary adventure, the character will gain levels only by completing specific goals, rather than by defeating monsters. These goals are as follows:

- The character will advance to 5th level if they gain access to the dungeon level (Area 21).
- The character will advance to 6th level after they perform the ritual "Laying the House to Rest" (see the "Endings" section).

## ANCIENT AND RECENT HISTORY

"**Death House**" is the name given to an old manor townhouse by the locals of the village of Barovia. The House itself is a cursed, sentient entity that appears either within the village of Barovia (Area E7) or a small lot of cleared land just off the Old Svalich Road (Area A) beyond the Gates of Barovia (Area B) but still within the Svalich Woods (Area C). At times it has shown up as a dilapidated abandoned house in the middle of a graveyard. Other times as a farmhouse or cliffside manor or beside a country stream. Where it is located is up to the DM's discretion.

**Death House** has been destroyed many times over the centuries and the locals speak of it with dark fear and suspicion. The House resurrects itself every thirteen years in Barovian time. The time has come full circle, but the House is not the same Durst Manor House that developed a haunted, ghoulish cult described in the original *Death House* mini-adventure.

The current re-embodiment of **Death House** is as a manor under reconstruction and owned by a wealthy private citizen of Barovia, Aleko Dobromir. He was deeded the home in payment for his law services to Count Strahd Von Zarovich and his estate.

Aleko has removed some of the old furnishings and repurposed or renovated the rooms within Death House over the past nine months. Since the renovation has begun, many strange incidents have occurred to construction workers and house staff that he has hired. Many of them do not stay past a week in his employ and Aleko has been growing increasingly frustrated. He has heard of the character's skill in handling such situations with intelligence and discretion. He hires the character to investigate and remove any curse upon his new residence.

## DEATH HOUSE'S FEATURES

**Death House** (CE legendary gargantuan construct) is a cognizant creature, fully aware of its immediate environment within Barovia and all creatures within the house and dungeon. Its goal in this current resurrection is to be left vacant in dark silence. The renovation has disturbed it to the point where it will torment workers, staff, and visitors. It has summoned various hauntings, House memories, cursed beings, and lesser demons to deal with those who refuse to depart.

As in the original mini-adventure, **Death House** has four stories (including the attic), with two balconies on the third floor—one facing the front of the house, the other facing the back. The house has wooden floors throughout, and all windows have hinges that allow them to swing outward.

Ceilings differ in height by floor. The first floor has 10-foot-high ceilings, the second floor has 12-foot-high ceilings, the third floor has 8-foot-high ceilings, and the attic has 13-foot-high ceilings. The dungeon level has 8-foot-high ceilings and is co-located wherever the house sits in Barovia. It is considered a part of the house and likewise can change with each reincarnation.

The character can burn the house to the ground if they want, but the house is immortal. It can heal/reform in mere hours and will eventually resurrect itself in another thirteen years in a different locale. The house can take a variety of forms and change its goals, rooms, décor, and summoned creatures in its new form.



## ADVENTURE HOOK: ALEKO DOBROMIR

This scenario assumes that the character has a developed background as an established adventurer, investigator, and problem-solver with contacts in the village of Barovia. They are enroute to enjoy a drink at the **Blood of (on) the Vine Tavern (Area E2)** when **Aleko Dobromir** (LG male human **noble**) waves them over to join him at his table.

The village of Barovia is hushed this evening, and the air grows chill. Entering the Blood of the Vine Tavern, you notice the shoddy tables and chairs are already full of patrons, some of whom you recognize from previous visits (The Vistani owners Alenka, Mirabel, and Sorvia sit at a table near the front door). The fire in the hearth blazes and crackles but does nothing to diminish the chill's bite. Where is Arik the Barkeep?

A solitary, middle-aged, wisp of a man sits at a corner table and he beckons to you, the gleam of a golden ring catching your eye as he waves. Balding, thin, and wiry—he is obviously looking at you through thick spectacles that make his eyes seem to bulge. He is dressed in Barovian finery, not with the marks or air of nobility, but he's certainly wealthy. His shrill voice pitches high above the low murmurs of the villagers, "Arik, a bottle of wine for my friend, on my tab, please!"

If the character looks around, it's obvious that there are no other seats available than the one at Aleko's table. Having a wealthy patron buy their drinks isn't a bad way to spend an evening either. If they look in their coin purse, it's run a bit dry between adventures. Reluctant characters can be further encouraged by Arik bringing out a dusty vintage of very fine, expensive Barovian wine and leading them to the table.

As Arik pours your glass of wine, he sets the vintaged bottle in the middle of the table without a word. Once Arik returns to the bar to clean glasses, the strange little man speaks squeakily to you: "Welcome my friend! I am Aleko Dobromir, a barrister (attorney) in this village, and I've heard it said that you have skill in investigating, solving, and..." he leans in slightly, lowering his high pitch, "especially—discretion. I desire to retain your services for a particularly intriguing, and personally frustrating case."

## ROLE-PLAYING ALEKO DOBROMIR

As the adventurer questions Aleko, they can learn the following information:

- The current location of the house (DM's discretion) and receipt of the key to the front gate and door.
- "The house is a payment from Count Strahd Von Zarovich for my services as an attorney for his estate, Castle Ravenloft." (He won't add more: client confidentiality).
- "I've been renovating the first three interior floors of the house over the past nine months. Recently I've started on the attic and that's when several unexplained occurrences in the house have happened with construction workers and household staff."
- "Over the first six months most of the incidents have been benign: sounds of footfalls when no one else is in the house, distant disembodied chanting, and the sound of a child crying when no child is in the house."
- "Over the past month, some of the incidents have become more disturbing:"

- "A maid was cleaning the bathroom (Area 13) and suddenly shrieked that the tub was full of blood. She ran screaming from the house, but when I checked, it was empty and there were no signs of blood."
- "A worker was pushed violently down the attic stairs (Area 16) when there was no one in the attic. Fortunately, they only broke their leg and not their neck. He's moved away from Barovia entirely."
- "Lastly, the house butler mysteriously fell from a balcony on the third floor (Area 12C) to the ground (Area 1A) and died tragically last week. Everyone left and I have been staying here at the Tavern to reorganize."
- "A few people in the village believe that the house is cursed and it's become impossible for me to hire workers to complete the reconstruction or hire household staff."
- Aleko is not aware of the House's past, sentience, character, or purposes. He hasn't had any hauntings happen to him personally in the House, but he is also rarely there due to his busy travels as a barrister (lawyer).

As the conversation slows, Aleko peers around the tavern hall nervously. The bottle of wine now sits dry in the middle of the table. Several patrons have left for the evening and the firelight dims.

"I'm at my wits end and desperately need your skills. I'll pay you very well upon successful, I don't know... exorcism? Vistani curse removal? bashing unseen tricksters? or some scientific solution to this...tragic mystery. As a good faith trust, I'll even give you a magical item that I'm sure you will find useful."

You can choose a different magic item, but a good item is the one that Aleko is currently wearing as spectacles:

### EYES OF MINUTE SEEING

Wondrous item, uncommon

These crystal lenses fit over the eyes. While wearing them, a character can see much better than normal out to a range of 1 foot.

- You have an advantage on **Intelligence (Investigation)** checks that rely on sight while searching an area or studying an object within that range.

## ROLE-PLAYING RELEVANT NPCs

**Arik the Barkeep.** Arik Lorensk (CN male human **commoner**) tends bar and unconsciously cleans the glasses, one after another, continuously. He ignores all attempts to question him.

**Vistani Owners.** Alenka, Mirabel, and Sorvia (N female humans (Vistani) **spies**) show little interest in the plight of Aleko or the character's investigation. If bribed, they suggest that the character visit Madam Eva (see [Curse of Strahd](#) Sourcebook, [Chapter 2, Area G](#)) to discuss the matter.



**Burgomaster Kolyan Indirovich.** Since this timeline is set before the Castle Ravenloft adventure, the Burgomaster (LG male human **noble**) is alive and well. If the player seems reluctant to help Aleko, the Burgomaster may be an additional encourager. Though not eavesdropping, he did happen to overhear some of their conversation. The rotund and naïve Burgomaster is largely ignorant of the house and its history, but has concerns over villagers being frightened, harmed, and killed. He is willing to add a minor monetary incentive (DM's discretion) to the investigation, officially making the character a "village constable" with a copper badge of authority.

**Madam Eva.** Of course, consulting **Madam Eva** is the best thing that a character can do in this situation. However, the encounter should still leave the character in a cryptic mystery until the house is physically investigated. Feel free to adapt the descriptions found in *Curse of Strahd* Sourcebook, **Chapter 2, Area G** to this scenario. Instead of answering any direct questions to help the character (outside of the fact that there is *not* a Vistani curse on the House), Madam Eva will conduct a Tarokka **card reading** for the character. Be certain to have the following Tarokka cards ready to place in their appropriate order and position:

**Card 1: The History of Death House. High Deck (Raven).**

This card tells you history. Knowledge of the ancient will help you better understand your enemy. This is a hidden source of information; a fortunate turn of events; a dark secret with the potential for good.  
This tome can be found in Area 9.

**Card 2: Child of Dawn. High Deck (Innocent (Adapted)).**

This card sheds light on one who will help you greatly in the battle against darkness. A being of great importance who seeks freedom from peril. This speaks of one with serenity; inner strength and self-reliance.  
The ghost of Rose Durst can be found in Area 20.

**Card 3: Holy Symbol of Dawn. Master of Glyphs (Priest).**

This card tells of a powerful force for good and protection, a source of great hope. It stands for enlightenment; those who follow a deity, a system of values, or a higher purpose. The **Holy Symbol of Dawn** is in Area 21.

**Card 4: Holy Water of Dawn. Three of Glyphs (Healer).**

This is a card of power and strength. It tells of a weapon of water and light. An angel's tears. It represents healing; a contagious illness, disease, or curse; those who practice the healing arts.  
The basin with **holy water** can be found in Area 31.

**Card 5: The Death House. Eight of Stars (Necromancer).**

Your enemy is a creature of darkness, whose powers are beyond mortality. This card will lead you to its vile heart! It speaks of unnatural events and unhealthy obsessions; a dark altar for those who follow a destructive path.  
The Heart of Death House is in Area 38, the dark altar in the ritual chamber, where all of the first four elements must be brought to perform the ceremony in "Laying the House to Rest" (see "Endings").

**Count Strahd Von Zarovich.** Of course, this is the worst possible person to question and EVERYONE (especially Aleko) will warn the character *strongly* to avoid questioning him or going anywhere near Castle Ravenloft. Aleko will mention that Strahd remains adamantly tight-lipped about the payment for Aleko's services but obviously considered it a reward. While **Strahd** may be mildly amused by the entire situation (the lawful and good Aleko deserves a cursed house in Strahd's twisted mind), any attempt to question him will likely result in the vain attempt to enter the castle (at best) or the emphatic and early termination of this adventure (at worst).

## OUSTED

Once the character fully enters **Death House**, the House tries its best to oust them so that it can continue its dark melancholy in silence.

The House will progressively (floor by floor) attempt to scare, hamper, provide obstacles, and finally kill the adventurer on their journey to "Laying the House to Rest". As a part of these scare tactics, it will use the hauntings below during character rests. Also, the House will progressively summon a worsening weather event floor by floor. Returning to previous floors will not change back the newest weather progression.

**First Floor:** Sunshine

**Second Floor:** Growing overcast

**Third Floor:** Rain

**Attic:** Violent Thunderstorm

## RESTING IN DEATH HOUSE

Should the character choose to take a short or long rest in **Death House**, they may be haunted (75% chance). With each rest and haunting, move to the next number in sequence to make the hauntings progressively dark and intimidating.

Order	Haunting
1.	The character wakes to feel a small spider crawling on their face, its sticky webbing on their mouth and nose.
2.	The character hears scurrying, tiny squeaks, and scratching noises from a nearby wall.
3.	The character wakes up to hear the sound of a small boy crying somewhere in the house.
4.	The character is shocked awake as a high-pitched, blood-curdling scream emanates somewhere close to their resting position. They suddenly realize that it came from themselves.
5.	The character is nudged awake by the non-combative, translucent <b>ghost</b> of the butler, Wilhelm. Unable to speak, he is frantically trying to warn them to leave the house.
6.	The character is unable to move. They are paralyzed, shackled, and dangling above a dark altar while thirteen shadowy apparitions chant in growing volume and unison, "One must die. One must die! ONE MUST DIE!" The character wakes in a cold sweat. It was just a nightmare...or was it, a memory? It was so real.



# AREAS OF THE HOUSE

The following areas correspond to labels on the [map](#) of the house found in [Curse of Strahd, Appendix B](#). Numerous map resources exist and can be used (even virtual table top), although décor has changed in some areas of the House.

## DM's Option: Trouble with the Doors.

In this option, the House gives the character trouble when they are opening doors. This gets progressively worse floor by floor. Using a crowbar grants an advantage.

**First Floor:** 10% chance, DC 12 **Strength** check.

**Second Floor:** 33% chance, DC 13 **Strength** check.

**Third Floor:** 67% chance, DC 14 **Strength** check.

**Attic:** 100% chance, DC 15 **Strength** check.

## 1. FIRST FLOOR: ENTRANCE

### 1A. Stone Portico.

The ornate iron key given to you by Aleko fits the new wrought-iron gate's lock and turns easily. The gate swings inward effortlessly on its hinges. The clean archway and stone portico glistens in the sunlight.

A glittering chandelier with a soft-white, mystical glow hangs from the ceiling. A pair of iron-framed, full-length stain-glassed doors depict an angelic being. The beautiful angel holds a sword high, riding dawn's sunbeam from the eastern mountains to victory over the hordes of cringing, demonic creatures in the valley below.

A decorative doorbell pullcord runs along the right side of the doorframe, likely connected to a servant's station. The same key fits the iron lock on the double doors and they open without a sound on well-oiled hinges.

This is where the butler was found deceased (in front of the gate) after a fall of about 25 feet from the balcony on the third floor, above (Area 12C). Various chandeliers and items in the House are magically enchanted with a permanent [light](#) that gleams a soft white color.

### 1B. Grand Foyer.

The foyer is no less grand than the portico and immaculately kept. A matching chandelier lights this area as well, the soft white glow illuminating a variety of paintings on the mahogany-paneled walls, obviously the work of master painters. Aleko's wealth is being clearly displayed for visitors. A decorative red carpet welcomes you officially to the manor.

Another pair of stain-glassed doors at the end of the hall depict the same angel. This time the seraph is kneeled in prayer within a sunbeam, hands on the hilt of a down-turned sword that has pierced an evil demon at the solar's knees. Aleko obviously believes in divine justice, you muse. The doors lead further into the manor.

### Paintings:

If the character chooses to investigate the paintings, a successful DC 12 **Intelligence** ([Investigation](#)) or DC 12 **Wisdom** ([Perception](#)) check reveals that the central focus of each painting is a dark manor house in the distance. The Barovian painters are from different centuries and the house appears to be the same but in different locales: within a village, an open field, a wooded clearing, a graveyard, atop a cliff, or beside a small stream.

## 2. MAIN HALL

### 2A. Wide Hall.

The stain-glass doors open upon a massive hall that spans the entire width of the house. The white marble floors sparkle from the central chandelier light and the mahogany walls glisten, recently oiled. An elaborately decorated white marble fireplace on the north wall is set to be lit, hardwood logs and iron fireplace tools at the ready beside it. A set of rectangular architectural models adorn the mantle, perhaps the handiwork of a professional designer. At the southern end of the grand hall is a red marble staircase that rises magnificently to the floor above.

### Mantle Décor:

When the character inspects the mantle and its décor, reveal the following:

The white marble mantle is decorated in a variety of angelic beings, some with swords or spears, others with harps or trumpets. Upon the mantle rest four rectangular models that perfectly reveal each floor of the manor house in precise miniature detail. It appears that if they were stacked, they would produce a solidly-constructed child's dollhouse.

A successful DC 12 **Wisdom** ([Perception](#)) or DC 12 **Intelligence** ([Investigation](#)) check reveals the general location of secret doors in Area 9, Area 11, Area 15a, and Area 21 (but not the trapdoor in Area 3). This will grant the character an advantage to find the secret doors.

### 2B. Cloakroom.

When the character examines the cloakroom, reveal the following:

You open the mahogany door to a small cloakroom, five-foot square with wooden pegs set into the cedar-lined walls. It is clean, but completely empty.

There is nothing of interest here.

## 3. TEA ROOM

This cozy room is bright and warm; a white-wood paneling made from tulip trees is complimented by breezy lace curtains that embrace the sunlight through the clear windows. Beautiful woven tapestries depicting pleasant farmland scenes decorate the north and east walls.

Four cushioned chairs surround an ornate card table, the cards neatly stacked in a dealer's box in the center of the table. A set of three plush, ivory-colored couches encircle the unlit hearth.

A pure silver tea serving set complete with delicate hand-painted tea cups rest on a silver tray. The beautiful set is able to be transported on a wheeled, white-wood cart.

### Tea Set:

The silver tea serving set and tray are valued at 250 gp while the fragile tea cups are worth 80 gp.

### Trapdoor:

A trapdoor is concealed mystically by [Death House](#) in the southwestern corner of the room. It can't be perceived or opened until the character approaches it from below (see Area 32).

#### Haunting:

As you begin to exit the tea room you hear the snarls of wolves right behind you, the snapping of razor-sharp teeth at your heels makes you jump in sudden dread!

There is nothing there. The House will continue to use similar hauntings in its attempt to oust the character.

## 4. KITCHEN AND PANTRY

### 4A. The Kitchen

This small kitchen is illuminated by a soft-white, mystical glow from a crystal oil lamp posted on the wall near the entrance. The dishware is stacked neatly in a cabinet on the north wall, while a preparation table is tidy and clean opposite. Against the east wall, a brick, domed oven reposes unlit, adjacent to a door that probably leads to a pantry. Labeled service bells are lined horizontally in a row along the west wall where a dumbwaiter sits quietly in the corner.

Plates, cups, and silverware (worth 50 gp) are all carefully stacked and polished. The kitchen itself is well kept and the oven doesn't appear to be very old and has been used very little. An iron pipe rises from the oven as a vent for the smoke, eventually exiting through the attic ceiling.

#### Service Bells:

The bells seem to be attached to cords from the ceiling that when pulled cause a bell to dance on a spiraled metal coil. The labels below the bells (at eye-level) are crisply written in flowing script: Portico, Main Hall, Tea Room, Dining Hall, Study, Ball Room, Master Suite, Dumbwaiter-2, and Dumbwaiter-3.

The labels identify the location where the servants are to be summoned or where the dumbwaiter is to go (or return from). The bells are connected to cords that run to the various locations. The summoning pull cord in the rooms is often disguised as an ornate piece of window drapery or tapestry hanging near a window or fireplace.

#### Dumbwaiter:

Opening the sliding panel to the dumbwaiter, you notice that it must be on the third floor, above. A network of cables run down the corners of the tight, two-foot-square stone shaft. It appears to be a simple rope-and-pulley system that operates from a geared mechanism in the bottom of the shaft, attached to switches on the wall beside the opening, marked with the desired floor.

The shaft connects to Areas 7A (the servants' quarters) and 12A (the master bedroom). A small character can squeeze into the box with a successful **DC 10 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check. The small elevator's rope-and-pulley mechanism can support 200 pounds of weight before breaking.

### 4B. Chilled Pantry

The confined pantry is surprisingly chilled, but it is well-provisioned. The shelves are stocked with a full wine rack, spice racks, and sacks filled with flour, wheat, sugar, salt, onions, and potatoes. Wooden boxes packed with fruits and vegetables are stored alphabetically along the bottom shelves. Various ceramic jars and bottles containing cooking oils, sauces, milk, cream, cheese, tea leaves, butter, nuts, and dried pastas are arranged on the shelves. Dried and drying garden herbs hang aromatically from hooks set in the shelving. Only the meat hooks are empty.

The food is fresh and it is edible for daily rations. The chill is produced by a permanent enchantment placed upon this room, keeping it perfectly at 40 degrees Fahrenheit.

#### Haunting (DM's Option):

As you step deeper into the pantry, the door suddenly slams shut. When you go to check it, it refuses to open, sealed tight as the cold begins to crystalize your breath.

The House only means to scare the character and after a few minutes of chilled claustrophobia, the door will suddenly open.

#### Haunting:

As you step from the pantry back into the kitchen, you suddenly hear a small bell ring a few times. It is shockingly clear in the silence of the house. You look at the service bells and the "Portico" bell abruptly stops moving.

Checking the portico, of course, reveals no one is there. Combined with the above optional haunting, the character may begin to realize they are unwanted in the House.

## 5. DINING ROOM

Sunlight glints off the crystal chandelier, casting prisms of color over the mahogany table and eight cushioned chairs. Lace drapes frame the windows and match the white-wood paneling and the ivory-colored cushioning on the chairs. The table is formally set with polished silverware precisely positioned around ornate dinner plates and crystal glasses. Crisp, white cotton dinner napkins are folded expertly upon each place setting. Empty serving pitchers, crystal decanters, and a large crystal punch bowl sit on a small serving table located by the hall entrance and near the clean, white-marble fireplace. A stack of wood and iron fireplace utensils stand ready. Lastly, a magnificent tapestry of an angelic court surrounding the Morninglord adds further brightness to the formal dining room.

#### The Tapestry:

The woven fabric of the tapestry is exquisite, truly a masterwork. The angel court décor ties all of the artistry on this floor into a grand theme of divine justice and light.

A successful **DC 12 Wisdom (Perception)** or **DC 12 Intelligence (Investigation)** check reveals that a particular solar (to the right-hand side of the Morninglord in the tapestry) is a consistently recognizable face. The same face was on the "Innocent" card in Madam Eva's card reading. While not immediately recognizable to a character new to **Death House** until they enter Area 20, any character with previous experience in the House will recognize the face of Rosavalda "Rose" Durst.

#### Haunting (DM's Option):

As you begin to examine the tapestry closer, the woven material seems to shake and then to plunge downwards, lapping and overlapping in curls at your feet. Looking up, you are startled to see that the iron rod it was hanging from is hurtling towards your head!

Dodging the iron rod will require a successful **DC 12 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check or take 1d6 hp of bludgeoning damage.



## 6. SECOND FLOOR: UPPER HALL

This upper hall also spans the entire width of the house. Two sets of double-doors stand guard over the middle of the hall to the east and west, while a solitary door leads just off the staircase to the east. Mahogany built-in shelves flank the doors, and the paneling rises to 12-feet, making the hall seem even more spacious than the floor below. Sundry decorative items grace the shelves for the inquisitive purveyor of art. A white-marble fireplace lies dark and silent to the north, a ticking clock on the mantle signals by echoing chimes that it is now noon. The majestic red-marble staircase continues its dizzying spiral to the third floor.

### Mahogany Built-in Shelves:

Dozens of curious items are displayed (some are listed here). Feel free to come up with a few curios as well and use this as a humorous break in the story (DM's Option).

- A Barovian star map housed in a leather-bound tube.
- A miniature Vistani barrel-wagon in a glass bottle.
- A circular glass globe with multi-colored sand inside (the sand continuously shifts as the globe is rotated).
- A hunting arrangement of crossbows: a **heavy crossbow**, a **light crossbow**, a **hand crossbow**, and 20 **bolts** for each weapon.
- A framed map of the village of Barovia that appears to have once been a jig-saw puzzle. Area E7 is missing.
- A rack of ludicrously large Barovian smoking pipes with a small cannister of snuff and a pouch of pipe weed.
- A large aquarium holding several rare species of Barovian fish. A small sign says, "Please **DO NOT** tap on the glass!"

## 7. FEMALE SERVANTS' QUARTERS

This is obviously the servants' quarters. Its minimal and unadorned furnishings include two run-down beds with a pair of weathered footlockers sagging drearily at the foot of each bed. In marked contrast, bright and clean servants' uniforms hang in the open closet. The dumbwaiter shaft lies open in the corner, dark as a crypt.

### 7A. Bedroom:

The footlockers are empty except for a hurried, unfinished letter:

*Dearest Mother,  
I'm scared here in this house. Though at times it can be bright and cheerful and the Master is gentle and kind, I have seen and heard things here that make me question my sanity. I've decided to return home immediately, and no, it is not due to homesickness!*

### 7B. Closet:

The uniforms are not the typical drab, Barovian aristocrat servant formal-wear. There are white dresses with ivory-colored sashes, accented with lace frills at the collars and cuffs.

### Dumbwaiter:

A dumbwaiter in the corner of the west wall has a button on the wall next to it. Pressing the button rings the bell in area 4A.

## 8. LAW OFFICE

It is obvious that Aleko uses this room as a comfortable study of his art: Barovian Law.

Although the lace curtains let in some light, it seems to be growing overcast outside, casting shadows around the room. A pair of plush leather chairs flank the white marble fireplace where an alabaster statuette of blind Lady Justice oversees the room from the mantle. A decorative mahogany desk and lavish wing-backed chair sit near the windows.

The truly impressive mark of this room is the floor to ceiling book shelves with massive law volumes filling every gap possible and still some reside on the floor. The 12-foot-high rolling ladder is a convenient furnishing.

### The Desk:

The desk has a few items resting on top of it: a candle that magically glows a soft-white color in a silver candlestick holder, a silver letter-opener, a jar of ink, and a quill pen. Inside the desk drawer is a letter kit containing ten blank sheets of parchment.

### The Bookshelves:

The bookshelves hold hundreds of law tomes including (but certainly not limited to, be creative):

- *Barovian Law and Religious Devotion*
- *Law As an Institution Against the Vistani Incursion*
- *Criminal Law Inquests and Scientific Inquiry*
- *Quickly Writing a Last Will and Testament in Barovia*
- *Consolidated Laws of Barovia in 50 Volumes*
- *Library of Barovian Law and Practice Through the Centuries* (250 volume set)

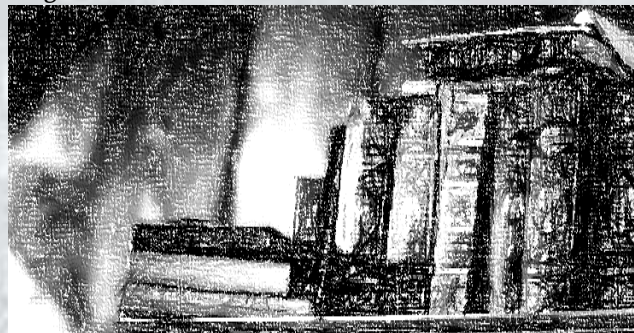
### Secret Door:

A successful DC 13 Wisdom (**Perception**) or DC 13 Intelligence (**Investigation**) check reveals a secret door behind the bookshelf on the south wall. An advantage is given to this check if the character viewed the house model in the Main Hall (Area 2A). It can be unlocked and swung open by pulling on a switch disguised to look like a red-covered book with a blank spine. Beyond the secret door hides Area 9.

## 9. SECRET ROOM

The bookshelf slowly rolls open on a set path, but pushes back as if it desires to close back into the shelving. It reveals a cluttered closet with grimy shelves crammed with unreadable, rotting tomes embellished with archaic characters. A black, heavy chest crouches at the end of the narrow room, its lid partially opened as if to speak.

Unless the secret door is propped open, springs in the hinges will cause it to close on its own.



### Bookshelves:

These tomes once described bogus fiend-summoning and necromantic rituals of a cult called the Priests of Osybus. They are now rotted beyond readability.

### Chest:

The black, heavy wooden chest with clawed iron feet contains the hidden tome *The History of Death House*.

### *The History of Death House:*

This gruesome grimoire is made from leathery Barovian (human) skin on the exterior and the parchment within is likewise fashioned from the same. The tome is linked to **Death House** and cannot be removed from within the House. It reveals the history and secrets of the House, its immortal sentient character, purposes and goals, former owners, those who have died within its walls (multiple pages), and how to perform the ritual "Laying the House to Rest" (see the "Endings" section). Those who read the book will gain an advantage to find secret doors, hidden items, key items/people, and traps.

Of course, the knowledge contained in the book solves the mystery, but does not *accomplish* the solution, which is the condition that Aleko has placed upon the retainer.

### Haunting:

As you remove the black tome from the chest, you are suddenly struck in the torso three times, simultaneously, from different directions. You feel like you have been pierced but you see no physical sign of it. A wave of nausea assaults you and your head swims. Panic fills you and you have the urgent desire to flee, to escape.

These symptoms are illusory and will fade momentarily with no physical damage to the character.

## 10. BALLROOM

This room would be breathtaking in full sunlight, but the overcast skies outside now cast a dark shroud on this magnificent ballroom. White lace drapes frame the western windows while a central crystal chandelier remains dim above. A harpsichord and standing harp watch each other sullenly across the ballroom from one another, the polished floors silently absent of dancers. The mantle of the shadowy, white-marble fireplace is graced by crystal angel figurines in various poses of refined dance. Empty mahogany, high-backed chairs with ivory-colored cushions are the silent onlookers to this lonely scene.

### Harpsichord and Standing Harp:

These items are kept in pristine condition and are remarkably well-tuned. Playing either of the instruments will initiate the haunting, below.

### Haunting:

As you play the instrument, the crystal angel figurines first begin to tremble, then shake, then fall one by one to the marble base of the fireplace, shattering horrifically into millions of sharp shards.

Attempting to pick up the shards will cause 1d4 hp of slashing damage to the character.

### Haunting (DM's Option):

As you play the instrument, the crystal solar figurines first begin to tremble, then shake, then fall one by one to the marble base of the fireplace, shattering horrifically into millions of sharp shards. The shards splinter into a crystal cloud, flying throughout the long hall, piercing everything in their path.

Dodging the splinter cloud and exiting the room will require a successful DC 13 **Dexterity (Acrobatics)** check or take 1d8 hp of slashing and piercing damage.

## 11. THIRD FLOOR: BALCONY HALL

The red-marble staircase wearily carries you to its final floor, a balcony that overlooks the spiraled height of the stairs from the third floor. The ceiling is lower here, making it feel like it may fall and crush you easily at its whim. The air is thick with the dust of renovation. Facing the balcony railing is a full-size marble statue of a solar angel, its arms embracing a wreath of roses and wings outstretched in the picture of serenity. A few solitary doors are visible through the balcony hallway with a set of double doors at the end of the hall to the east.

### Marble Angel Statue:

This massive piece of magnificent artwork is highly detailed. It must have taken several workers and an engineer with a marvelous mechanism to get it here. The statue has been blessed by the priests of the Morninglord in Barovia (Area E5), creating a safe zone here on the balcony and the adjacent rooms (Areas 13 and 14). No hauntings will occur here if the character rests. If the character was unable to facially recognize the solar before, a successful DC 14 **Wisdom (Perception)** or DC 14 **Intelligence (Investigation)** check reveals the face as a theme in the angel design used throughout the House. The same face was on the "Innocent" card in Madam Eva's card reading. While not immediately recognizable to a character new to **Death House** until they enter Area 20, any character with previous experience in the House will recognize the face of Rosavalda "Rose" Durst.



### Secret Door:

A successful DC 14 **Wisdom (Perception)** or DC 14 **Intelligence (Investigation)** check will reveal the secret door in the west wall. The character will have an advantage to this check if they successfully observed the model in Area 2A, have read the *History of Death House*, or asked for more details from Aleko regarding the worker's fall down the attic steps. It opens easily to expose a dusty staircase leading to the attic. The dust has been recently disturbed (from the construction worker's fall).



## 12. Master Suite

### 12A. Master Bedroom

The stained glass on the pair of doors depicts a solar in repose, at peace, drifting on sunlit clouds among the birds of the air. The doors open to a luxurious master suite. Rain pelts the windows and you hear distant grumbings of thunder.

Investigating further, a rare white-tiger skin rug graces the floor near the barely-used marble fireplace. Above it is a humble portrait of Aleko in his finery, creases of worry on his bald forehead and around his spectacled eyes. A sturdy roll-top desk is littered with paperwork, at a glance they appear to be bills from the renovation.

A four-poster bed dominates the chamber and even though the bedding is clean and bright, the atmosphere outside makes it seem dismal and depressing.

The adjacent parlor is clean yet melancholy, a few law tomes lying open on the table. The dumbwaiter gapes open in the corner, slack-jawed as it reveals the wooden transport box inside.

Churning gusts of rain and wind cause the wooden balcony door to clatter in protest, as if the weather is about to burst in like a bandit.

#### The Desk:

The total cost of this renovation must be staggering, even a quick tally brings it in at well over 100,000 gp! A personal letter in flowing aristocratic script catches your eye.

*My dear servant Aleko,*

*Enclosed you will find the deed to a House that I'm sure you will agree is not only full payment for your humble services to my estate, but also a deserving reward for your good deeds and charity to my beloved Barovian people and the church.*

*Such a grand House, once renovated of course, will certainly make you the envy of the aristocracy and perhaps someday soon grant your rightful place amongst our number.*

*Your Lord and Master,*

*Count Strahd Von Zarovich*

The house deed is in the desk drawer, a legal document granting Aleko Dobromir the house and property, signed by Strahd and sealed legally with his sigil in red wax.

#### Dumbwaiter:

The dumbwaiter in the corner of the west wall has a button on the wall next to it. Pressing the button rings the tiny bell in Area 4A.

### 12B. Closet

The closet is filled with Aleko's clothes and shoes, some of them of somber Barovian custom and others a bright white. All of them are clean, pressed, and ready for wear.

### 12C. Balcony

The pelting rain obscures everything past the ornate iron railing of this small balcony. You can barely view the ground some twenty-five feet below. You are fairly certain this is not the balcony that the butler fell from.

## 13. BATH CHAMBER

It has been a while since you have seen the extravagance of indoor plumbing, but here it is in all of its glory. A beautiful, white porcelain tub rests on brass clawed feet, with matching sink and privy! A clay mug sits on the back ledge of the sink with a toothbrush and razor sitting within. Sitting next to the mug is a large bar of lye soap.

The room smells faintly of bleach and the ceramic-tiled floor is in a checkered black and white pattern. Clean, white-cotton hand and bath towels rest on brass rods near the sink and bath tub.

The most amazing feature of this room is that the water is delivered through pipes not only cold, but also to a separate *hot* spigot...Aleko must have retained the services of an arch-mage! Drains carry all of the waste and dirty water away in an engineering marvel.

Although this is the room that the maid fled the house from, there is no physical evidence of blood, not even a drop. There is no longer a haunting here due to the proximity of the blessed angel statue in Area 11.

## 14. CLEANING STORAGE ROOM

The door sways open onto a tidy storage closet. Clean folded linens (towels and bedding), comfortable blankets, fluffed pillows, and bars of soap sit on the shelves. A broom leans against the far wall near fireplace-ash and floor-scouring buckets. Floor wax and wood oil are stored in gallon containers on the floor below the shelves.

The broom is a normal item. There is no longer a haunting (or animated broom) here due to the proximity of the blessed solar statue in Area 11.

## 15. MALE SERVANTS' QUARTERS

### 15A. Butler's Quarters

This lonely room is expansive in size, but minimal furnishings make it even more melancholy, especially given the rain assailing the windows and the double doors to the balcony.

A large, relatively comfortable-looking bed is flanked by a pair of night stands. A large wardrobe is open enough to see the uniforms of a Barovian butler: traditional drab, black suits and white, stiff-collared shirts.

The bedroom once belonged to the house butler, Wilhelm, who also served as Aleko's valet. His tragic fall was indeed caused by the Death House while he was on the exterior balcony (Area 15C), falling to the ground at the portico (Area 1A).

#### DM's Option:

The encounter with Wilhelm can occur here (Area 15A) in a "safer" environment rather than the balcony (Area 15C).

#### Secret Door:

A successful DC 14 **Wisdom** (**Perception**) or DC 14 **Intelligence** (**Investigation**) check will reveal the secret door in the east wall. The character will have an advantage to this check if they successfully observed the model in Area 2A, have read the *History of Death House*, or asked for more details from Aleko regarding the worker's fall down the attic steps. It opens easily to expose a dusty staircase leading to the attic. The dust has been recently disturbed (from the construction worker's fall).

### 15B. Chef's Quarters

This small room is simply furnished with a bed and wardrobe. Within the wardrobe are three sets of a chef's uniform, clean and ready for a chef's service in the kitchen. There is nothing else of interest in this room.

### 15C. Balcony

The pelting rain obscures everything past the decorative iron railing of this small balcony. A bend in the west railing indicates where the butler must have fell. You can barely see the stone portico some twenty-five feet below.

Examining the railing further, you surmise it must have taken quite a lot of force to cause such a thing to happen to the sturdy metal. You realize it was not a mere accidental tumble.

As you turn to leave the balcony there is a sudden flash of lightning. You are shocked to see the dark phantom of the butler blocks the doors, a horrified look in his eyes as his taloned fingers reach out for your throat!

"Leave... this... place! You... must... leave... me... alone!" His groan is not a plea, but a real threat!

#### FIGHT or FLIGHT:

**Fight.** Given the treacherous conditions (rain, obscurity, slick balcony surface), every round the character remains on the balcony will require a successful **DC 14 Dexterity (Acrobatics)** or **DC 14 Strength (Athletics)** check or risk falling. If the check fails and the character is on a square beside the railing, they tumble over the railing. This triggers a **DC14 Dexterity saving throw** where failure will cause 10 (3d6) hp of falling damage and success will cause the damage to be halved.

**Flight.** If the character falls or leaps (same saving throw required, as above) from the balcony, Wilhelm will vanish until the character returns to this area. If the character flees, Wilhelm will chase them out through the front gate but go no further.

### WILHELM, SPECTER

*Medium undead, chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 30 (5d8) (40 hp max)

**Speed** 0 ft., fly 50 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	14 (+2)	11 (+0)	10 (+0)	10 (+0)	11 (+0)

**Damage Resistances** acid, cold, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Damage Immunities** necrotic, poison

**Condition Immunities**

**charmed, exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained, unconscious**

**Senses** **darkvision** 60 ft., passive Perception 12

**Languages** Common, Barovian (variant: can vocalize)

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Incorporeal Movement.** The specter can move through other creatures and objects as if they were **difficult terrain**. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

**Sunlight Sensitivity.** While in sunlight, the specter has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on Wisdom (**Perception**) checks that rely on sight.

#### ACTIONS

**Life Drain.** *Melee Spell Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) necrotic damage. The target must succeed on a **DC 10 Constitution saving throw** or its hit point maximum is reduced by an amount equal to the damage taken. This reduction lasts until the creature finishes a long rest. The target dies if this effect reduces its hit point maximum to 0.





## 16. ATTIC: ENTRY HALL

Climbing the dusty stairs, thunder booms deafeningly overhead, shaking the attic as you enter. The rain is coming down in sheets, battering the roof overhead like a drum. Inside the attic, dust clouds rise to welcome you and cobwebs drape the corners and rafters. Four doors lead from the empty central hall. A padlock hangs open from the slot in the clasp on the doorframe closest to you.

### Padlock on the Door:

An open iron padlock hangs in a clasp on the doorframe to area 20; the iron key is inside the lock. The lock is not on the metal ring attached to the door, so it is not a barrier to entry. The lock and key will function normally if used.

## 17. CREEPY ATTIC BEDROOM

The door sticks momentarily in protest before groaning open into a spare bedroom thick with dust and cobwebs. The furniture also appears spare, a mismatched menagerie of décor. The item that draws your attention the most is a rocking chair that is moving slightly, a creepy, cobwebbed doll reclines in it. A flash of lightning crosses the window and shatters the image momentarily. As your eyes readjust, you ponder: did the doll just smile at you?

This dust-choked room stores a slender bed, a nightstand, a small iron stove, a writing desk with a stool, an empty wardrobe, and the rocking chair with the creepy doll in it.



### Haunting:

As you turn to leave the creepy bedroom, a tingly chill runs down your spine and the hairs on the back of your neck rise. You distinctly hear the doll say in an eerie little girl voice, “You *should* leave the House. I would *run*...”

## 18. ATTIC STORAGE

This is what an attic typically looks like: a pack-rat nest of old furniture shrouded in dusty white sheets—chairs, couches, coat racks, standing mirrors, dress designing mannequins, and some old, empty suits of armor doomed to stand vigil over the sad lot. A wooden trunk, its cover open, reveals a trove of... more dusty sheets.

### Secret Door (see Area 21):

Even if aware of a secret door here by reading *The History of Death House*, only Rose (Area 20) can reveal the secret door. Any attempts to find it without her are frustrated.

## 19. SPARE BEDROOM

Lightning crackles, striking the roof of the house here, burning a small, blackened hole in the attic roof. Rain immediately follows through, quickly drenching the small iron stove. More flashes from the window reveal a slender bed, a nightstand, a rocking chair, and an empty wardrobe all covered in cobwebs and dust.

There is nothing else of interest here.

## 20. CHILDREN’S BEDROOM

This used to be a children’s bedroom. Two small beds crouch in each corner away from the door. An open toybox with windmills painted on its sides is filled with a jumble of dolls, stuffed animals, wooden soldiers, carved horses, and alphabet blocks. All of the furnishing are draped in cobwebs.

A slender girl with black hair, perhaps no more than ten years old, sits on the edge of the bed to the right. She’s dressed in normal Barovian fashion, though it is a bit dated. She seems familiar, like you’ve seen her face before.

She speaks matter-of-factly, “Hello, I’m Rose. They took my dollhouse. Are you here to return it?” She points to a rectangular dollhouse roof sitting on the floor, the lower floors plainly missing. Work-boot scuff marks in the dust reveal the nefarious bandit’s entrance and exit.

### ROSAVALDA “ROSE” DURST, NPC GHOST

*Small undead, lawful good, (modified)*

**Armor Class** 12

**Hit Points** 45 (10d6) (60 hp max)

**Speed** 0 ft., fly 40 ft. (hover)

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
8 (-1)	14 (+2)	10 (+0)	12 (+1)	12 (+1)	18 (+4)

**Damage Resistances** acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical attacks

**Damage Immunities** cold, necrotic, poison, radiant

**Condition Immunities**

**charmed, exhaustion, frightened, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained**

**Senses** **darkvision** 60 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** Common

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Incorporeal Movement.** Rose can move through other creatures and objects as if they were **difficult terrain**. She takes 5 (1d10) hp force damage if she ends her turn inside an object.

**Ethereal Sight.** Rose can see 60 ft. into the Ethereal Plane when she is on the Material Plane, and vice versa.

### ACTIONS

**Radiant Touch.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit (magical attack), reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 17 (4d6 + 3) radiant damage.

**Healing Touch (3/Day).** When Rose intentionally touches any creature (including herself) with this ability, the target magically regains 17 (4d6 + 3) hit points and is freed from any curse, disease, poison, blindness, or deafness.

## ROLE-PLAYING ROSE

Rose is the *Child of Dawn* (from Madam Eva's card reading) and her face is now recognizable to the character. Rose is an innocent victim of the **Death House** who has returned in this resurrection of the House because her dollhouse has been "stolen". It is, of course, sitting on the mantle of the fireplace in the main hall (Area 2A). If the player doesn't immediately remember, the character will remember with a successful **DC 10 Intelligence** check. It will take the character ten minutes to get the dollhouse and return to the room (unmolested by hauntings but maybe a little winded).

Once the dollhouse has been returned, Rose states that she is in the character's debt and will help them with what they need to know and do. Rose will gladly show the character to the secret door in Area 21 and serve as an NPC ally (run by the DM) for the remainder of the adventure.

If the character shuns her aid, the monster fights will be dangerous. Rose will still follow them ethereally and help slyly or vocally. She'll help to cleanse the House in the end.

She has these memories and characteristics:

- Rose does not remember her past, but is aware that she is deceased and that she has a brother, father, mother, and nursemaid. She isn't worried about where they are. She claims to visit and play with her brother frequently.
- She has a divine insight to the ritual for "Laying the House to Rest," assisting the character in finding the other elements for the ritual, including *The History of Death House* (Area 9) if the character hasn't found it yet.
- Rose knows that there is a basement, and remembers being told of a monster in the basement, but doesn't remember having been in it; role-play her accordingly.
- She knows that she can avoid combat by going ethereal and will move to an advantageous safe position to attack.
- Although Rose is in the form of a child and is innocent, lawful good, etc., she has a mind that is far more mature given her "ghost age". She is unafraid of the macabre.
- In this House resurrection, Rose does not have the ghost abilities of withering touch, horrifying visage, or possession. She does have a radiant and healing touch.
- Rose's traits: serene, smart, pithy, self-confident, protective, fearless, and determined. She will encourage and assist the player character accordingly.

## 21. SECRET STAIRS

Rose will not allow the character to continue down the stairs without two items: *The History of Death House* (from Area 9) and the **Holy Symbol of Dawn** that is described in this area.

As Rose leads you by the hand, you feel a serene peace wash over you, and the storm that rages above the attic seems to grow distant. You enter the attic storage room and remarkably, now you can clearly see a dainty, child's gold necklace hanging from a hook to the right of the door.

"There's my necklace," Rose says with a smile.

The bubble of hope is soon burst as you hear the sounds of metallic armor moving out from under dusty sheets.

### Necklace:

The necklace is **The Holy Symbol of Dawn**, a non-magical divine focus of the Morninglord valued at 100 gp. Retrieving it will open the secret door.

### FIGHT or FLIGHT:

If the character chooses to retrieve the necklace, the door to the stairs will open. The character now has a choice to make: fight or flight.

**Fight:** Each suit of armor grasps a spear and has a visored helm shaped like a wolf's head. Originally there were four in the upper hall (Area 6). The number animated here by the House will be to the DM's discretion according to the size of a group, but at least two should be animated for a solitary character (and Rose).

**Flight:** Fleeing down the stairs is the best choice as the tall and bulky animated armor will essentially catch on the walls and steps of the narrow stairway and tumble down, breaking off pieces until they are just a junk pile of armor parts (and spears) at the bottom. Feel free to play this up as a humor break, but the sounds will echo, loudly...

### ANIMATED ARMOR

*Medium construct, chaotic evil, (modified)*

**Armor Class** 18 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 33 (6d8 + 6) (54 hp max)

**Speed** 25 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
14 (+2)	11 (+0)	13 (+1)	1 (-5)	3 (-4)	1 (-5)

**Damage Resistances** acid, fire, lightning, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical attacks

**Damage Immunities** poison, psychic

**Condition Immunities**

**blinded, charmed, deafened, exhaustion, frightened, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned**

**Senses blindsight** 60 ft. (blind beyond this radius), passive Perception 6

**Languages** --

**Challenge** 1 (200 XP)

**Anti-magic Susceptibility.** The armor is **incapacitated** while in the area of an **anti-magic field**. If targeted by **dispel magic**, the armor must succeed on a Constitution saving throw against the caster's spell save DC or fall **unconscious** for 1 minute.

**False Appearance.** While the armor remains motionless, it is indistinguishable from a normal suit of armor.

### ACTIONS

**Multi-attack.** The armor makes two melee attacks.

**Slam.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) bludgeoning damage.

**Spear.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +4 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 5 (1d6 + 2) piercing damage. **Thrown** (range 20/60), **versatile** (1d8 + 2).

### Level Advancement:

If the animated armor was defeated by fight, the character will advance to **level 5** in this area.

### Staircase:

The staircase starts in the attic and descends 50 feet to the dungeon ("basement" Rose calls it) to Area 22.



A cramped wooden staircase spirals down a dark shaft with walls of mortared stone. You find yourself holding your breath in order to keep the choking dust at bay, cobwebs sticking to your hands, your face, your hair. Unable to see past your extended hand, the stairs groan in creaky protest, rotted boards on the verge of breaking. Just as you feel that you may black out, the narrow stairs finally end in a short stone hallway that intersects in a “T” with a longer stone hallway. You finally remember to breathe. Rose looks completely unaffected and smiles sheepishly at you.

## DUNGEON FEATURES

As in the original mini-adventure, the dungeon level (“basement”) below **Death House** is excavated out of earth, clay, and rock. The tunnels are 4-foot-wide by 7-foot-high with timber braces at 5-foot intervals. Rooms are 8 feet tall and supported by thick wooden posts with crossbeams.

The only exception is Area 38, which has a 16-foot-high ceiling supported by stone pillars. Unless the character has **darkvision** they must provide their own light sources in the darkness of the dungeon.

As the character investigates the dungeon, they will see centuries-old human (and other) footprints in the earthen floor leading in all directions. Water from the rainstorm will be dripping from the ceilings and walls making the floors muddy and walls slick (creating a disadvantage for **Strength (Athletics)** or **Dexterity (Athletics)** climbing checks) in most areas.

The metal gauntlets are “on” in the dungeon and **Death House** is done with trying to scare and harass the character with hauntings. Unlike the Durst cult, **Death House** is a legendary necromancer with the power to summon undead, former occupants, and **demons** to do its bidding.

## RESTING IN THE DUNGEON

Should the character choose to take a short or long rest in the dungeon, they will be assaulted by **crawling claw(s)** (number is at the DM’s discretion). The House’s purpose is simply to prevent the character from fully resting, so this need not be a swarm, it may even just be one; enough to scare the character awake. Only Area 31 is exempt from this attack during rest breaks.

## 22. DUNGEON LEVEL: ACCESS

### Level Advancement:

If the animated armor was defeated by flight, the character will advance to level 5 in this area.

The short entry tunnel to the basement intersects into choices to the left and right, both heading into darkness and the sounds of dripping water. You look at Rose and she shrugs, “I’ve never been here before, but I have a good feeling about the right tunnel.”

Rose is, naturally, correct (using her divine insight). The quickest path to the **Holy Water of Dawn** is through Area 27 and Area 29 to Area 31. From Area 31 (where the water is located) a trek back through Area 29 north to the stairs down at Area 30 will lead to the adventure conclusion in Area 38. If the character has rejected Rose’s aid, then it will likely be the hard, long road as she is either ethereal or she feels slighted (“Okay, but remember, I told you so.”).

## 23. DURST FAMILY CRYPTS

Several crypts have been cut from the stone, some sealed by heavy stone slabs, some left ajar. They are otherwise cold, dark, and enigmatic.

Each crypt is sealed with a stone slab except 23A and 23B. Removing a slab from its fitting requires a successful **DC 15 Strength (Athletics)** check; using a crowbar or something similar grants an advantage on the check.

Rose will discourage any “investigation” and get upset with any looting or desecration in these crypts. Expectedly, she has very little (really nothing unless pressed) to say about Walter, Gustav, or Elisabeth.

### 23A. Empty Crypt

The blank stone slab meant to seal this crypt leans against a nearby wall. The crypt is empty.

### 23B. Walter’s Crypt

The stone slab meant to seal this crypt leans against a nearby wall. Etched into it is the name Walter Durst (the stillborn baby of Gustav and the nursemaid). The crypt is empty.

### 23C. Gustav’s Crypt

The stone slab is etched with the name Gustav Durst. The chamber beyond contains a coffin atop a stone bier. The crypt is empty.

### 23D. Elisabeth’s Crypt

The stone slab is etched with the name Elisabeth Durst. The crypt contains a stone bier with an empty coffin atop it. The wall has slightly caved into the chamber from behind the coffin.

### 23E. Rose’s Crypt

Rose nonchalantly says, “Oh, so that’s where my body is, huh?” She continues to prance by without a care. The stone slab is etched with the name Rosavalda Durst. The chamber contains a coffin on a stone bier with her remains.

### 23F. Thorn’s Crypt

Rose pauses here for a moment and nods to someone unseen and unheard, “Oh, hi Thorn. No, I’ll play with you later upstairs. Go on ahead. I’m helping this person who brought my dollhouse back. Well, go on.”

The stone slab is etched with the name Thornboldt Durst. The chamber beyond contains a coffin on a stone bier with his remains.

## 24. MORGUE

This morbid room smells of death and decay. A wooden table near the entrance has been strangely burned. Scorched tufts of black fur create the shape of a hound, but there is no corpse. It smells like sulfur and brimstone.

Darkened recesses hold wooden pallets, each holding monstrosities that you have never seen before. Holding your nose, you are simply glad that they appear dead and are not moving.

Rose grimaces at the sight, obviously disgusted. She just says, “Eww!” A lean corridor saturated with water leads to a short flight of stairs.

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (**Religion**) or DC 15 Intelligence (**Religion**) check will reveal that the monsters are all of demonic (Abyssal) origin: the burnt table once held a dying **hell hound** that combusted, while the pallets hold two dead **dretch**, and two dead **manes**. Rose has no clue what they are but feels like they have evil origins.

## 25. GHOULISH MASSACRE

Small rivulets of water flow down the few stone steps into a large chamber that once served as living quarters with open, partitioned rooms. Each alcove though looks like they have been torn apart, straw, wood shards from pallets and shattered chests are strewn chaotically around. The stench is awful. Four ghouls lie unmoving on the floor, they appear to have been ripped to shreds. A dark stone well is the centerpiece of this macabre massacre scene. The well smells dank and moldy. The water is contaminated and unfit for consumption.

## 26. OPEN SPIKED PIT

A successful DC 15 Wisdom (**Perception**) check reveals an absence of footprints in this tunnel and will also reveal the open pit. If the character has read the *History of Death House*, they have an advantage to find the trap. Allow Rose a check as well if the character fails. If both checks fail, read the following:

As you follow the corridor, sounds of dripping water start to irritate your sense of hearing. You absent-mindedly look back as you're walking and by the time you look forward, you find yourself teetering on the edge of an open pit!

### Spiked Pit:

The pit is a 5-foot-long, 10-foot-deep with sharpened wooden spikes at the bottom. If both the character and Rose fail the perception check, above, the character must succeed a DC 15 Strength (**Athletics**) or DC 15 Dexterity (**Acrobatics**) check. Otherwise, they will fall, landing prone and taking 3 (1d6) bludgeoning damage from the fall plus 11 (2d10) piercing damage from the spikes. The pit is muddy and the walls are slick.

## 27. BONE HALL

As you enter this hall every step is littered with crushed bone. It powders like a fine mist, obscuring your vision. Partially devoured kills are stored here, portions of the carcasses scattered along the tunnel. The scent of blood and rotting flesh hangs heavy in the air. A broken table and a pair of smashed benches adds to the scene of carnage. In the middle of the south wall is a dark alcove (Area 28).

## 28. BARRELS OF BLOOD

This was perhaps a larder or food pantry at some time, but now it holds barrels filled with blood. The smell is thoroughly nauseating. Flies buzz in the air while various dead bugs float on the viscous, deep-red surface. The corpses, bones, and blood have obviously been collected for some wicked reason. Rose will be of little help here as this is beyond most Barovians' comprehension. A successful DC 15 Wisdom (**Religion**) or DC 15 Intelligence (**Religion**) check will reveal they are being collected for an Abyssal demon summoning ritual.

## 29. SHADOWY CROSSROADS

You slowly approach a dark crossroad of intersecting tunnels. The shadows seem to deepen and the walls close in. You are startled by a blur of darkness that rushes by and you barely see a winged humanoid creature whose lower body trails off into nothing, and whose claws slashed out toward your skull in passing. You feel it trying to feed off your fears, doubts, and memories...to rend your mind.

### FIGHT or FLIGHT:

**Fight.** This will be a difficult fight, but the shadow demon's vulnerability to radiant damage will give Rose an advantage to significantly affect the outcome.

**Flight.** The shadow demon will not follow the character into Area 31. It will not attack the character again unless they attempt a long or short rest outside of Area 31.

### SHADOW DEMON

*Medium fiend (demon), chaotic evil*

**Armor Class** 13

**Hit Points** 66 (12d8 + 12) (108 hp max)

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 30 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
1 (-5)	17 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	13 (+1)	14 (+2)

**Saving Throws** DEX +5, CHA +4

**Damage Vulnerabilities** radiant

**Damage Resistances** acid, fire, necrotic, thunder; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from non-magical attacks

**Damage Immunities** cold, lightning, poison

**Condition Immunities**

**exhaustion, grappled, paralyzed, petrified, poisoned, prone, restrained**

**Senses** **darkvision** 120 ft., passive Perception 11

**Languages** Abyssal, Telepathy 120 ft.

**Challenge** 4 (1,100 XP)

**Incorporeal Movement.** The demon can move through other creatures and objects as if they were difficult terrain. It takes 5 (1d10) force damage if it ends its turn inside an object.

**Light Sensitivity.** While in bright light, the demon has disadvantage on attack rolls, as well as on **Wisdom (Perception)** checks that rely on sight.

**Shadow Stealth.** While in dim light or darkness, the demon can take the **Hide** action as a bonus action.

### ACTIONS

**Claws.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one creature. *Hit:* 10 (2d6 + 3) psychic damage or, if the demon had advantage on the attack roll, 17 (4d6 + 3) psychic damage.

### DM's Option (for groups):

Be careful if numerically adding more shadow demons. Increasing hit points at first is a smarter way to make this more of a challenge to larger parties of level 5. For larger parties of lower levels, you may even consider a lesser variant of the creature. Playtesting may help you to decide what is best given the composition of the group.



## 30. ABYSSAL STAIRS DOWN

An extensive set of stone steps descend down into darkness. Chillingly, a grisly trail of bones, blood, and dismembered body parts slides down the center of them. The silence below is shattered as you hear the sudden crack of a whip and a weak moan. You look over at Rose and she nods encouragingly to you, “It will be okay, I think...but...let’s try to be quiet though, alright?”

The character will arrive in Area 35 after descending this 20-foot-long staircase.

## 31. ANGELIC TEARS

This room is encircled with skeletons whose arms suspend from corroded manacles against the walls. They wear the meager, tattered robes of monks; wooden holy symbols of the Morninglord gracing their necks. A 15-foot-wide alcove in the southern wall holds an ancient stone altar where the sigil of the Morninglord has been scratched and marred. Near the altar, a weathered stone statue looks upon the desecrated shrine morosely.

In this House memory, this room’s purpose and décor goes back to the House’s founding. Initially this was a secret (literally underground) holy shrine that was desecrated. The monks were imprisoned for their “crimes of piety” and killed by starvation, the altar marred, but the statue remained untouched for many years.

### The Statue:

The statue is of a kneeling angel that holds a basin balanced between its arms and one knee. The design makes it appear that the angel is weeping into the basin, but the water in the basin is actually dripping from the ceiling above the alcove.

Rose looks at you, a bit saddened. “We’re going to need some of that water. I hope that you’ve brought something to carry it in?”



### Holy Water of Dawn:

The **Holy Water of Dawn** is in the basin of the blessed angel statue. It is the element that Madam Eva’s card reading, *The History of Death House*, and Rose will confirm as necessary for the ritual in “Laying the House to Rest.”

### The Altar:

If the character forgot a container, they can find an undamaged, stoppered clay jug behind the altar.

### Concealed Door:

A more detailed scan of the room easily reveals what remains of a rotted concealed door in the middle of the east wall. The door pulls open to reveal a stone staircase that climbs 10 feet to a landing (Area 32).

### Treasure (DM’s Option):

This adventure is not designed to be a monster-bashing loot-fest, but the DM may want to place a magical item here that is helpful to the character in their future battles within the module (e.g., a **ring of fire resistance**). The item should be in line with their class, level, and the DM’s high/low magic world design.

If you think the character has all they need to defeat the following monsters, then a miscellaneous rare find that is usually appreciated is a **Heward’s Handy Haversack**. Such an item may be found behind the altar or on the stairs to Area 32, strapped to an ill-fated adventurer’s skeleton. It could contain some useful nonmagical items for the character.

### HEWARD’S HANDY HAVERSACK

*Wondrous item, rare*

This backpack has a central pouch and two side pouches, each of which is an extradimensional space. Each side pouch can hold up to 20 pounds of material, not exceeding a volume of 2 cubic feet. The large central pouch can hold up to 8 cubic feet or 80 pounds of material. The backpack always weighs 5 pounds, regardless of its contents.

Placing an object in the haversack follows the normal rules for interacting with objects. Retrieving an item from the haversack requires you to use an action. When you reach into the haversack for a specific item, the item is always magically on top.

The haversack has a few limitations. If it is overloaded, or if a sharp object pierces it or tears it, the haversack ruptures and is destroyed. If the haversack is destroyed, its contents are lost forever, although an artifact always turns up again somewhere. If the haversack is turned inside out, its contents spill forth, unharmed, and the haversack must be put right before it can be used again. If a breathing creature is placed within the haversack, the creature can survive for up to 10 minutes, after which time it begins to suffocate.

Placing the haversack inside an extradimensional space created by a **bag of holding**, **portable hole**, or similar item instantly destroys both items and opens a gate to the Astral Plane. The gate originates where the one item was placed inside the other. Any creature within 10 feet of the gate is sucked through it and deposited in a random location on the Astral Plane. The gate then closes. The gate is one-way only and can’t be reopened.



## 32. HIDDEN TRAPDOOR

Behind the rotted remains of a door, stairs ascend to a landing. On the landing is a ladder that rises up a mere 6 feet to a trapdoor that is bolted shut from this side.

The character may choose to leave the trapdoor alone, or they may open it:

Sliding the bolt out from its locked position you open the trapdoor and are startled to find yourself in the corner of the tea room, on the first floor of the house. You never noticed this trapdoor when you were in this room before.

The trapdoor opens on to Area 3, above.

### Development:

Once the trapdoor has been found and opened from this side, it remains accessible to the character as a way into and out of the dungeon level.

## 33. JAILER OF SOULS' ANTECHAMBER

This antechamber is sparsely furnished. A tarnished chandelier overhangs an oak table with pieces of shattered pottery atop it. A pair of high-backed wooden chairs and two unlit standing candelabras complete the dismal setting. Strangely, this room has the distinct smell of sulfur and brimstone.

The table once had a clay jug and two clay flagons atop it.

## 34. JAILER OF SOULS' CHAMBER

This 15-foot-square bedchamber is grimy. Large sections of the earthen walls have fallen into the room from the east and north. A shabby straw-filled mattress sits on an oak bedframe while an overturned footlocker rests against an empty wardrobe. The smell of sulfur and brimstone is overpowering here, making you gag involuntarily.

Something stirs within the hole in the north wall. At first all you see are a malevolent pair of crimson eyes. Next, a massive black hound steps out to face you, smoky tendrils of fire rippling from its snarling maw.

### FIGHT or FLIGHT:

**Fight.** The danger of this fight lies in the fire damage that a **hell hound** produces, so instead of a recharge, the creature has been modified to use the ability once per day.

**Flight.** Hell-hounds are known for their relentless determination to hunt down their prey. However, it will not follow the character into Area 31. It will instead either return to this area or go on downstairs for an easy meal in Area 35 (DM's Option).

### DM's Option (for groups):

In this scenario there is room to add maybe one (coming from the east wall) or two (another lying on the bed) more hounds. Do this only to challenge larger parties. Keep in mind that two or more hounds will benefit from the advantage created from pack tactics. Increasing hit points on one hound at first is a smarter way to start to challenge larger parties. For larger parties of lower levels, you may even consider a lesser variant of the hound and potentially adding more numerically. Playtesting may help you to decide what is best given the composition of the group.

## HELL HOUND

Medium fiend, lawful evil (modified)

**Armor Class** 15 (natural armor)

**Hit Points** 45 (7d8 + 14) (70 hp max)

**Speed** 50 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
17 (+3)	12 (+1)	14 (+2)	6 (-2)	13 (+1)	6 (-2)

**Skills** perception +5

**Damage Resistances** fire

**Senses** darkvision 60 ft., passive Perception 15

**Languages** Understands Infernal and Abyssal (but can't speak)

**Challenge** 3 (700 XP)

**Keen Hearing and Smell.** The hound has advantage on **Wisdom (Perception)** checks that rely on hearing or smell.

**Pack Tactics.** The hound has advantage on an attack roll against a creature if at least one of the hound's allies is within 5 feet of the creature and the ally isn't **incapacitated**.

### ACTIONS

**Bite.** *Melee Weapon Attack:* +5 to hit, reach 5 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d8 + 3) piercing damage plus 7 (2d6) fire damage.

**Fire Breath (1/day).** The hound exhales fire in a 15-foot cone. Each creature in that area must make a **DC 12 Dexterity saving throw**, taking 21 (6d6) fire damage on a failed save, or half as much damage on a successful one.

## 35. CHAMBER OF SUFFERING SOULS

Altoves exhibiting gruesome "trophies" encircle this rectangular chamber—severed human extremities disgustingly displayed. A man clothed in a black, hooded robe is slumped over in a chair facing the room in the southeast corner, his hands shackled behind him and his ankles manacled to the chair. In the silence between drips of water you can hear him mumble, over and over, like a faint chant, "He is the Ancient. He is the Land." Then he breathes his last breath, like a long sigh, before expiring. In this reincarnation of the House, the priests of the Cult of Osybus have been imprisoned (Area 36) and are being systematically tortured and sacrificed by a **Cambion** ("The Jailer of Souls", see Area 36) to open an Abyssal Gate in Area 38. It simply desires to return to the Abyss and conveniently found these charlatan evil cultists to serve as the sacrifices required to do so.

If the character listens at the corridor to Area 36, read:

"Quiet, you wretch! I said QUIET! I'm trying to think!"

The distinct sound of metal meeting a stone wall reverberates down the hall. Moans that echoed down the hall are suddenly silenced in the pall of tangible fear.

The southernmost tunnel slopes down at a 20-degree angle into gloomy water and ends at a corroded portcullis (Area 37).



## 36. CHAMBER OF IMPRISONED SOULS

As you start to go down the tunnel, you feel Rose's hand on your arm. Looking back at her, she shakes her head at you and whispers, "No. Those are evil people being harmed by something...far worse."

If the player character continues on, they were warned.

**DM's Option:** If the character doesn't have a magical weapon, there is a +1 *magical weapon* consistent with the character's main weapon abilities that can be found with a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check, forgotten along the edge of the tunnel leading into this room. Rose could also just point at it and say, "You might need that."

Continuing on, a prison stretches westward before you in a depressing despondency. You hear the rattling of shackles and the coarse breathing of tortured prisoners. The stone walls and floors are discolored a bright-red from recent grisly events. A tall humanoid figure paces in the middle of the hall that runs between cells, holding a metallic spear. It has charcoal-black skin, cloven hooves, six-fingered hands, and an unearthly attractiveness. Its horns, leathery wings, and wiry tail further mark it as some sort of demon. Two of the original thirteen **cultists** (CE, human males) remain half-dead here, shackled as prisoners to the back walls of the cells. These prisoners will immediately die (they are Abyssally marked to do so) once the Abyssal Gate is prematurely torn open (see Endings, "Rending Open the Gate"). Ironically, they are remorseful now over having a summoned demon (by the House) in their dungeon.

The "Jailer of Souls," a **Cambion** (modified), is upset that its **plane shift** doesn't work in the House, so it is using sacrifices (the cultists) to open an Abyssal Gate.

### Secret Door:

A secret door in the south wall can be found with a successful **DC 15 Wisdom (Perception)** check and yanks open to reveal Area 38 beyond.

### Treasure:

Hanging on the back wall of the cell marked X on the map is a recently dead cultist clothed in a tattered black robe. If the character searches the body, they will find a gold ring (worth 25 gp) on one of his fingers.

## ROLE-PLAYING THE JAILER OF SOULS

This concluding monster must be handled well by the DM in order for the ending to be climatic and challenging, without being overwhelmingly deadly. The DM has a few options for how this final encounter will flow.

### JAILER, FIGHT or FLIGHT:

**Fight.** While not adverse to fighting, the Jailer is smart enough to retreat (and return to the Abyss). The fight can end with its retreat (flight) after losing half (41 hp) or three-quarters (62 hp) of its hit point total (DM's Option). Another option would have the Jailer already wounded by an earlier cultist fight, lowering its current hit point total.

**Flight.** The Jailer will flee through the secret door to where the Abyssal Gate is forming in Area 38 and will rend the Gate open rashly. If the character pursues the wounded demon or later enters Area 38, read the general description then go to Endings, "Rending Open the Gate".

## "THE JAILER OF SOULS," CAMBION

Medium fiend, chaotic evil (modified)

**Armor Class** 18 (chain shirt)

**Hit Points** 82 (11d8 + 33) (121 hp max)

**Speed** 30 ft., fly 60 ft.

STR	DEX	CON	INT	WIS	CHA
18 (+4)	18 (+4)	16 (+3)	14 (+2)	12 (+1)	16 (+3)

**Saving Throws** Str +7, Con +6, Int +5, Cha +6

**Skills** **Deception** +6, **Intimidation** +6, **Perception** +4, **Stealth** +7

**Damage Resistances** cold, fire, lightning, poison; bludgeoning, piercing, and slashing from nonmagical attacks

**Senses** **darkvision** 60 ft., passive Perception 14

**Languages** Abyssal, Common, Infernal

**Challenge** 5 (1,800 XP)

**Fiendish Blessing.** The AC of the cambion includes its Charisma bonus.

**Innate Spellcasting.** The cambion's spellcasting ability is Charisma (spell save DC 14). The cambion can innately cast the following spells, requiring no material components:

**3/day each:** **alter self**, **command**, **detect magic**

**1/day:** **plane shift** (self only). (Modified: This ability only functions when "Rending Open the Gate" (see Endings)).

## ACTIONS

**Multiattack.** The cambion makes two melee attacks or uses its Fire Ray twice.

**Spear.** *Melee or Ranged Weapon Attack:* +7 to hit, reach 5 ft. or range 20/60 ft., one target. *Hit:* 7 (1d6 + 4) piercing damage, or 8 (1d8 + 4) piercing damage if used with two hands to make a melee attack, plus 3 (1d6) fire damage.

**Fire Ray.** *Ranged Spell Attack:* +7 to hit, range 120 ft., one target. *Hit:* 10 (3d6) fire damage.

**Fiendish Charm.** (Modified (DM's Option): Do not use in the solitary adventure, but consider for larger groups. One humanoid the cambion can see within 30 feet of it must succeed on a **DC 14 Wisdom saving throw** or be **charmed** for 1 day. The **charmed** target obeys the cambion's spoken commands. If the target suffers any harm from the cambion or another creature or receives a suicidal command from the cambion, the target can repeat the saving throw, ending the effect on itself on a success. If a target's saving throw is successful, or if the effect ends for it, the creature is immune to the cambion's Fiendish Charm for the next 24 hours.

### CHARACTER, FIGHT or FLIGHT:

**Fight.** Whether the fight occurs here or in Area 38 it can easily turn deadly. You can further modify the Jailer by giving it a vulnerability to radiant damage (DM's Option).

**Flight.** If the character flees the fight, the Jailer will not pursue but rather attempt to finish its Abyssal Gate ritual quickly in Area 38 (going through the secret door).

**Avoid.** The character can avoid the entire combat here, by creeping stealthily back to Area 35. However, they will later face the Jailer in Area 38 before they begin their ritual "Laying the House to Rest".

## 37. RAISED PORTCULLIS

The short staircase descends into 2-foot-deep, murky water as it levels out into a larger pool in the room beyond. A raised, corroded-iron portcullis flashes sharp teeth at you from above this entry to the room beyond. Around the corner, you spot the edge of a wooden wheel embedded into the wall that operates the portcullis mechanism.

This tunnel can be blocked by the iron portcullis that is raised or lowered by turning a wooden wheel embedded in the east wall of Area 38. Alternatively, if found on the wrong side of the lowered portcullis (you never know what the Death House or an intelligent demon might do), it can be forcibly lifted with a successful **DC 20 Strength (Athletics)** check. Using a crowbar will grant an advantage to the check.

## 38. DARK HEART OF DEATH HOUSE

### General Room Description:

A murky emulsion of pitch-black water conceals most of the central floor of this forty-foot-square room. However, stairs ascend to dry stone ledges that embrace the walls.

In the center of the room, more stairs ascend to form an octangular platform that is also above the water-level. Long chains attached to shackles dangle from the spacious 16-foot-high ceiling grimly above a stone altar mounted on the platform. The altar is carved with repulsive bas-reliefs of ghouls ripping apart corpses, and is stained with fresh blood.

A ruined gap in the west wall leads to a dark, wide cave, the mouth of which is glowing with a blackish-red aura. As in the original mini-adventure, the water is 2 feet deep. The ledges and central dais are 5 feet high (3 feet higher than the water's surface), and the chamber's ceiling is 16 feet high (11 feet above the dais and ledges). The chains dangling from the ceiling are 8 feet long.

In this House memory, the cult recently performed unsuccessful demon-summoning ceremonies in this ritual chamber. They sacrificed many victims in their attempts.

The Jailer has been using the cultists' technique against them: shackling cultist prisoners to the chains, dangling them above the altar, cutting them open with its spear, and allowing the altar to be bathed in cultist blood.

### The Dark Altar:

You ascend the platform, splattering murky water up the stairs as you climb. The blood-smeared, profane altar defiantly waits for you. It is, you realize, the dark heart of this House.

This is the location for the cleansing ritual for "Laying the House to Rest." For details regarding the ritual see the Endings section, below.

### The Western Cave (Forming Abyssal Gate):

The gap in the west wall leads to a naturally formed cave. Across the entrance to the cave is a glowing blackish-red aura. Rose pulls your arm gently back from it. "I don't think you want to touch that," she warns tersely. All you can see is a half-submerged pile of trash beyond.

This is the location where the Jailer comes for "Rending Open the Gate" (Endings, below). Touching the Gate will cause 10 (3d6) hp fire damage each round (no saving throw). The Gate disappears once the Jailer is through.

### Encountering the Jailer for the First Time:

If the character either avoided Area 36 entirely or snuck away from Area 36, this will be the first place they fully encounter the Jailer, as it enters the chamber through the secret door in the north wall.

It will enter when the character ascends the platform to conduct the cleansing ritual. If the character has seen the demon before, a full physical description is unnecessary, simply begin with the second paragraph in the boxed text to move the story along.

A tall humanoid figure enters from across the chamber, holding a metallic spear in one hand. It has charcoal-black skin, cloven hooves, six-fingered hands, and an unearthly attractiveness. Its horns, leathery wings, and wiry tail further mark it as some sort of demon.

The sound of dragging echoes through the chamber and you see the winged demon scowl as the body of a dead man in tattered black robes becomes jammed in a secret door to the north. It pulls on the man's arm repeatedly and frees him, only to make the corpse splash into the water below the dry ledge.

Suddenly, it seems to be aware of your presence. It sniffs the air, tendrils of fire flaring up from its taloned hands. Its eyes lock on you...and a bone-chilling ice grips your spine, nearly paralyzing you with fear.

### JAILER, FIGHT or FLIGHT:

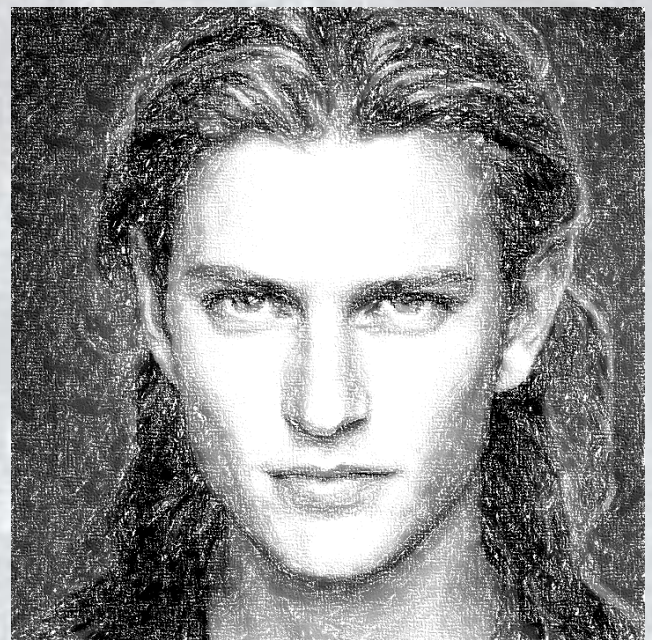
**Fight.** The Jailer can fly in this chamber. The fight can end with its retreat (flight) after losing half (41 hp) or three-quarters (62 hp) of its hit point total (DM's Option).

**Flight.** The Jailer will flee to where the Abyssal Gate is forming (see Endings, "Rending Open the Gate").

### CHARACTER, FIGHT or FLIGHT:

**Fight.** This fight can easily turn deadly. You can further modify the Jailer by giving it a vulnerability to radiant damage (DM's Option).

**Flight.** If the character flees the fight, the goals of the adventure are incomplete (see Endings, "Run Away!").





# ENDINGS

## RUN AWAY!

If the character decides the risk is not worth the reward, the **Death House** is glad that they leave. The House wins.

The player character might say, "Sometimes it is braver to run away, rest, recharge, re-equip, (collect a few friends), and tackle the Death House another day, right?"

Aleko may not see it the same way because the contract was not fulfilled. He will be fascinated to hear the character's tale, of course. He would also perhaps be willing to fund another excursion (even an adventuring group) based on how much the character shares and how far they delved into the House. However, Aleko is disappointed with the end results, especially if the character ran away after only investigating the first four floors of the House. There is no monetary or magic item reward for failing to fulfill the verbal contract.

If the Burgomaster made the character a constable, he may grumble that possibly he was too hasty. Maybe he should have made them a "deputy" constable.

Madam Eva and the Vistani will remain cryptic and aloof, not willing to sacrifice their neutrality in Barovia to help the unreliable character further.

Strahd will be slightly entertained. "Poor Aleko and his friend. So noble and deserving of the House. They just didn't know what they were getting involved in."

Rose will be upset with the character and will have to be ardently persuaded to give her assistance again. "Thorn would have done better than you did! You best come through, or I'll just let that demon skewer you this time!"

Lastly, depending on when the player character decided to leave, they might not have advanced in level. Failure does have a price.

## RENDING OPEN THE GATE

The demon flies through the ritual chamber to the cave mouth, entering the black and red aura. Using its spear, it carves through the magical gate, creating a gaping wound in space and time. A powerful gust of heated wind blasts into the dark heart chamber, knocking you flat.

Using its talons now, the demon rips into the sides of the wound, tearing and rending its way in. There is a huge thunderclap and a shockwave as the demon, the gate, and the aura suddenly disappear.

Stunned by the shockwave and what you just witnessed; you can only marvel at how you survived at all. Rose tilts her head to the side and says in her pragmatic tone, "Well, that's not something you see every day."

The Jailer of Souls has returned to the Abyss, the cultists and ghouls are completely decimated. Any Abyssian creatures (**shadow demon** and/or **hell hound**) that were not previously defeated are destroyed in the magic blast caused by the Gate suddenly being torn open and slamming shut. Essentially, the dungeon level is cleared.

The Jailer of Souls may now become a recurring nemesis for the character. Making a fiendish enemy is filled with revenge plots with twists and turns (DM's Option).

Now that the Jailer of Souls has been defeated or escaped through the Gate, the character can start the ritual to lay the House to rest.

## LAYING THE HOUSE TO REST

Described in *The History of Death House* and guided by Rose, the simple ritual requires the elements described by Madam Eva and identified throughout the module. The following elements are required to be brought to Area 38:

### Elements for Laying the House to Rest:

- *The History of Death House*. Grimoire (Area 9).
- *Child of Dawn*. The ghost of Rose Durst (Area 20).
- *Holy Symbol of Dawn*. Rose's necklace (Area 21).
- *Holy Water of Dawn*. Angel's tears (Area 31).

While the gathering of the elements and journey to the dark heart of the House (the altar in Area 38) was perhaps difficult, the ritual is fairly simple.

### Ritual for Laying the House to Rest:

1. Place *The History of Death House* on the dark altar.
2. Pour the *Holy Water of Dawn* on the tome and the altar.
3. Place the *Holy Symbol of Dawn* on the *Child of Dawn*'s neck (this will cause Rose to momentarily materialize).
4. The *Child of Dawn* must recite the following blessing:

### Prayer of Cleansing and Blessing of Protection:

*O Morninglord, we thank you for giving us victory over darkness. May You cleanse, bless, and protect this House from any evil presence. Leave no opportunity for any evil presence to take root in this House. Instead, let Your Presence fill this House that we may prosper with Your blessing. Watch over us and be our Shield of Dawn, Amen.*

The cleansing ritual complete, the grimoire will spontaneously combust in flames (disintegrating) and the altar will crumble to dust. If the Jailer was killed (rather than fleeing by rending the gate), the Gate vanishes now.

The **Death House** will go into a period of spiritual serenity and dormancy. Wilhelm's spirit is at rest. Rose will run off and go play with Thorn. It will be all sunshine and rainbows outside. But, as you might have guessed, this will only last for thirteen years. The House will be resurrected again, at a different location. Aleko may need to contact a Barovian realtor soon...flip it for a profit?

Aleko will be elated and relieved that the House is no longer "cursed" (at least temporarily). However, given the investment he has made in the House, he is only able to give the character a modest monetary and/or magic item reward (DM's discretion).

The Burgomaster is ecstatic over the success of the venture and declares that the village businesses grant the character a 10% discount on goods and services. He will also give the character their monthly wage as a "veteran" constable: 30 gp! "Don't spend it all in one place."

Madam Eva will secretly smile with Vistani pride. The character will be welcome around their campsites and the Vistani will be more sociable with the character; not always requiring to be bribed for information.

Strahd will be nonchalantly impressed with the character. Having Strahd's attention is not always a good thing, however. Look at what happened to Aleko.

Lastly, be sure to advance the character to level 6. "Congratulations! You beat the House. This time."

*Excalibur Penn*

2023

# WELCOME BACK TO THE DEATH HOUSE!

You thought that you were finished with the place, but not so!

The old, haunted manor house is receiving a home make-over! Deeded to Aleko Dobromir, the estate lawyer for Count Strahd Von Zarovich, the house is being renovated floor by floor.

Unfortunately for Aleko, strange incidents have been occurring in the house as the renovation has progressed. These incidents have frightened away construction workers and household staff, culminating with the recent death of his butler.

Aleko is desperate for his investment not to be wasted, so he is seeking a brave investigator to solve this tragic mystery. Does the house require an exorcism? Is there some sort of Vistani curse that needs to be removed? Are there unseen tricksters? Or is there some sort of scientific solution for a natural enigma?

Are you brave enough to enter the house, stay within, and solve an ancient conundrum?

